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American Orthodox Study Permanent Consultation Plan

(New York) - Leaders of Eastern Orthodox churches in America have set up a commission to study formation of a Standing Conference of the Orthodox Bishops in America.

At a meeting called by Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, leading prelates of nine churches also agreed to suspend all public statements about relations with non-Orthodox bodies until after a Pan-Orthodox meeting scheduled by Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople, probably on the Island of Rhodes in the summer of 1960 (see EPS No.49, 1959).

The Orthodox leaders unanimously deplored allegations of communist infiltration in Protestant churches made in a US Air Force Training Manual now withdrawn from circulation (see EPS No.8, 1960).

A further meeting of the prelates to be held on June 7 will hear reports from the commission on future inter-Orthodox co-operation in America.

Episcopal leaders present at the New York meeting came from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America, the Syrian Antiochian Church, the Serbian Eastern Orthodox Diocese in the US and Canada, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of America, the Romanian Canonical Missionary Church in the US and Canada, the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church, the Albanian Orthodox Church of America, and the Bulgarian Diocese of North and South America and Australia.

EPS, Geneva

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Churchmen Back Plans for Kenya's Future

(Nairobi) - Leading East African churchmen have supported the recommendations of the Kenya constitutional conference held in London last month.

They said the conclusions were "consistent with the teaching of the Holy Scripture on the dignity of man".

They also made a call for sustained prayer for those responsible for continuing the work of the conference.

The call was made by the Anglican Bishop of Mombasa, the Rt. Rev. L.J. Beecher, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, the Rt. Rev. R. Macpherson, the chairman of the Methodist Church in Kenya, the Rev. Elliott Kendall, the territorial commander of the Salvation Army, Col. W.G. Effer, and the general secretary of the Christian Council, Mr. P.D. Fueter.

The churchmen's statement said: "On the eve of the London conference we issued a call to prayer that God, the supreme ruler of all, would guide the thoughts and words of the delegates gathered at Lancaster House.

"We believe that the deliberations of the conference have indeed been guided by Almighty God to conclusions which are consistent with the teaching of Holy Scripture on the dignity of man, the ordering of human government and the relationship of the State and Judiciary.

"Where agreement has been reached, closer definition is now required. Certain important issues, including the stewardship of material resources, have been left unresolved. At all points, there is need for the exercise of balanced judgment.

"We therefore call on the members of our several churches to make sustained prayer for those responsible for continuing the work of the conference and giving closer definition to its recommendations, that the claims of God in the affairs of Kenya may continue to be heeded.

"We call also on our members, in Christian duty, to strive to understand the aspirations and anxieties of groups other than their own." EPS, Geneva

Better Church Building Urged in Britain

(London) - A conference on church building has advocated architectural advisory committees for Christian denominations in the United Kingdom.

Eighty participants in a meeting of architects, ministers and experts said that the committees should give church authorities "factual information", but avoid judgments on design.

The group asked for planning to meet the needs of youth, and outsiders as well as the existing worshipping community.

Other recommendations of the meeting, which was called by the "Consultative Christian Service" known as Christian Teamwork, sought early contact and close consultation between architect and church. Participants emphasised that the partnership depended on "humility, self-effacement and studious avoidance of the sensational" on the part of architects.

Congregations undertaking building were reminded that the "best work is often done when financial resources are limited" and clients were pressed to to trust the devotion, ability and integrity of architects.

The initiative for the conference, which was a follow-up of an ecumenical meeting on a similar theme last June at the WCC's Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, came from London architect Edward D. Mills.



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The programme included projection of pictures of contemporary churches and an exhibition of plans, drawings and photographs. Mr. Mills was chairman and the Rev. Bruce Reed, director of Christian Teamwork, led the daily prayers.

Christian Teamwork's trustees include Mr. George Goyder, Sir Kenneth Grubb, the Rev. John Marsh and Sir George Schuster. EPS, Geneva

Chinese Anglican Denies Forced Unification of Churches

(Sydney, Australia) - A Chinese priest of the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui - the Chinese branch of the Anglican Communion - has contradicted reports that the government of the Chinese People's Republic is forcing united worship and church union on Christian churches.

In an interview with Australian journalist Francis James during a two weeks stay in Australia, the Rev. Chao Fu San, dean of studies in the Union Theological Seminary of Peking, said there had been no pressure from the government to hold united services. He described united services in which he had voluntarily taken part as a leader and said that these were held in a Congregational church because the Anglican Cathedral in Peking was "awkwardly sited".

According to Mr. Chao Fu San non-Anglican congregations in Peking are growing to prefer the Anglican prayer book form of worship. He said that a Chinese Book of Common Prayer will soon be in use and will reconcile "illogical" differences within Chinese Anglicanism, based on the varying national background of the former Anglican missions.

The Peking clergyman indicated that he did not regard the question of orders as "an insuperable obstacle to organic union" with other churches in China.

"You must not say insuperable!" he affirmed. "It is a matter of our Lord's will. At the present moment it is something which has still to be discussed. You know that the Chung Hua Sheng Kung Hui stands firmly on the Lambeth Quadrilateral.

(The Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1920 declares that Anglicanism holds retention of four points as necessary for reunion: Holy Scripture, the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the two Gospel sacraments, and the historic episcopate).

"I do feel that the majority of our bishops enjoy a weighty prestige among all Christians in China," he added. "I think this will count, perhaps more than in South India. Do not feel worried Do not become critical. We are Anglicans, have no doubt."

The Anglican leader went on to say that "the status of Christians in China has risen proportionately to the removal of Western influence. Today there is no outside control of Chinese Christian Bodies," he declared. "We have become indigenous. We stand on our own feet. We are accepted in the same way as Moslems and other theists."

In reply to questions about the present attitude in China toward mission work Mr. Chao Fu San said he did not think there was any point in missionaries coming again to China "because the churches in China are now growing, standing on their own feet".

However, he emphasised that he did not hold the view that Western missionaries were just imperialist agents in disguise. "A few, no doubt", he said, but added that in fairness it had to be recognised that "the man who is a missionary is nearly always a stranger to the country where he works. At heart he must be", he continued. "Some who came to China ceased to be foreign to us. We remember these with great love. Toward the end there were unfortunately many who were

closely connected with the Kuomintang and it was surely only natural that the government should regard them with suspicion."

Mr. Chao Fu San said that many Americans and others abroad now wrote to the churches in China and that he thought the time had nearly come for more extensive contacts between Chinese and Western Christians.

The report of the interview with Mr. Chao has appeared in the Episcopal magazine "The Living Church" in the USA and in the "Church Times" in England.

EPS, Geneva

Eliot Play Used in "Retreat"

(Glion, Switzerland) - T.S. Eliot's play "The Cocktail Party" was used to focus attention on the role of the Christian community in the world at a five-day retreat for an international group of Christian workers here, March 16-21.

Fifty-seven "fraternal workers" in service jobs in Europe listened to an informal reading of the play and tried to estimate what its story of healed relationships had to say to them in the light of the Bible and the Christian faith. Dr. Charles W. Arbuthnot, field representative for Europe of the United Presbyterian Church USA, led the retreat.

The participants, brought together by the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches, came from field posts in nine European countries where they represent the overseas concern of international agencies and churches. They came from nine different home countries and ten different church backgrounds.

Insights for treatment of the Eliot play came from Bible studies on the Book of Acts led by the Rev. John Garrett, WCC Information Department director, and meditations on the task of fraternal workers in the ecumenical movement by the Rev. Daisuke Kitagawa, staff member of the World Council's Department of Church and Society.

Patterns worked out in previous annual retreats were followed when the group used individual cross-questioning and spontaneous drama to interpret what they discovered together.

This year's retreat joined with the local Swiss Reformed parish at the weekend, when the Glion pastor, the Rev. Jean-E. Roux, came with a group of parishioners to a dialogue on the work and problems of the area they serve (near Montreux, in the Swiss Canton of Vaud). The fraternal workers attended a service of Holy Communion in the Glion church on Sunday morning.

Another highlight of the meeting was the advance presentation of a new film, "The Nightingale Waits for the Summer", on the resettlement of Russian Old Believers in rural Brazil through the WCC's Service to Refugees.

Prayers at the retreat and the discussion on the Eliot play were led by the Rev. Keith Bridston, executive secretary of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. The conference was planned and carried through by a group working in Geneva under the direction of the Rev. Raymond E. Maxwell, of the executive staff of the World Council's Inter-Church Aid Division.

EPS, Geneva

Paris Civil Servants Meet on Interfaith Basis

(Paris) - Members of the French National Union of Catholic Civil Servants have met with an ecumenical group of laymen working in international organisations here to discuss "Unity".

The one-day encounter was a result of growing interest in the subject produced by the observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25 (see EPS Nos. 46, 1959, and 4, 1960).

Pastor Charles Westphal, a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, described the Council's history, structure and work. Other speakers were Professor Leo Zander of the Russian Orthodox Institute of St. Sergius in Paris and Father A. Memmessier, Dominican chaplain to the French Civil Servants' Union.

Professor Zander said there was an "instinctive" response, among laity who had never heard the word "ecumenism", to the idea of unity.

Father Menessier followed up by stressing the need for putting before church members in the parish the question: "Do I want to know more about my Protestant brother and to meet him in a spirit of charity?"

The meeting was one in a series arranged for the Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox and Roman Catholic members of the ecumenical group, formed in May 1959 at a retreat at Villemétrie, near Paris. A similar retreat will be held at Bièvres, France, May 27-29 this year. EPS, Geneva

Roman Catholic Bishops Sentenced in China

(Hong Kong) - The Shanghai People's Court sentenced Roman Catholic Bishop Ignatius Kung Pin-mei to life imprisonment on March 17 on charges of treason.

Twelve other Chinese Roman Catholics were condemned for periods between five and twenty years.

On March 18 the same court gave American Roman Catholic Bishop James E. Walsh, 68, a twenty-year sentence for espionage. Bishop Walsh and Archbishop Antonio Riberi, former Papal Internuncio to China, were alleged in the judgment to have plotted with the Chinese prisoners to overthrow the government. Archbishop Riberi left China in 1951.

The verdict called Bishop Walsh a "veteran United States imperialist spy who personally directed the Kung Pin-mei traitorous counter-revolutionary clique".

Reacting to the sentencing of Bishop Walsh, US Secretary of State Christian A. Herter said the accusations made against the bishop were "totally false" and his condemnation "inexcusable".

Mr. Herter said a protest would be lodged with the Chinese Government through its ambassador in Warsaw. He declared that Bishop Walsh's "only mission was religious and his personal devotion to the spiritual welfare of his fellow Catholics was so strong as to compel him to remain on the Chinese mainland despite the persecution of his church by a godless regime". EPS, Geneva

Poland Reducing Church Tax Burden

(Warsaw) - Reports in the Roman Catholic press predict a reduction in taxes payable by the church as a result of conversation between Cardinal Wysinski and President Gomulka.

Heavy taxation since 1959 has run the church into debt and threatened survival of some church institutions.

Details of the proposed reductions are expected to be worked out at conferences between the bishops and representatives of the government in the next few weeks. EPS, Geneva

Yugoslav Roman Catholic Leaders Tried and Sentenced

(Belgrade) - The Roman Catholic Bishop of Skopje, Smiljan Franjo Cekada, has been condemned to eighteen months in prison for smuggling, illegal trade and dealings in foreign currency.

The sentence was suspended for one year on a bond of good conduct.

Two Catholic priests, from Sarajevo and Zagreb, were sentenced respectively to two years and twenty months imprisonment on similar charges.

The bishop admitted in evidence that he had received money from the Holy See, outside the normal legal channels, between 1956 and 1959. The prosecution did not deny the bishop's claim that the money had been strictly used for the purposes for which it was given. EPS, Geneva

Continued US Protests Against Segregation

(New York) - Support for Negro protests against segregated eating places and other facilities in the United States continues to grow.

In New York, the National Student Christian Federation, in an information letter sent to key leaders, has pointed out that "students may wish to join in demonstrations where possible" or participate in sympathy demonstrations. The federation's letter was a follow-up to a statement sent by its Central Committee to campus groups (see EPS No. 11). The 3,000 Christian groups have also been urged to collect funds for the legal defence of the Rev. James M. Lawson, Negro student expelled from Vanderbilt University Divinity School for taking part in the demonstrations. At the same time, the NSCF urged that "Christian students could take special steps to see that Negroes, as well as white students, are members of campus Christian student groups". Later, the letter continued, groups may wish to invite persons who took part in the demonstrations in Nashville, Tenn., and elsewhere to share information about their experiences.

Mr. Lawson and 79 white and Negro college student demonstrators were arrested by police on charges of conspiracy to disrupt trade and commerce by participating in a sit-down strike at a lunch counter in Nashville.

Dean Robert J. Nelson of Nashville's Vanderbilt Divinity School has reported that a bi-racial committee appointed by Mayor Ben West has eased some of the local tension and it is not expected that Mr. Lawson will be sentenced before some agreement on segregated facilities is worked out. Dr. Nelson, who last week commented critically on Mr. Lawson's dismissal (see EPS No. 11), pointed out that the divinity and graduate schools at Vanderbilt have had Negro students for seven years. "The primary question," he said, "within the university is the question of the legitimacy of procedure by which the issue was resolved and the moral problem of whether a student can be dismissed because of moral views he holds concerning social change."

A statement issued by 14 of the 16 divinity school's faculty members, including Dr. Nelson, said, "Whether or not we approve his strategy, we believe that Mr. Lawson has endeavoured to follow his Christian conscience and we see no adequate justification for his expulsion from the divinity school. We have had no part in such action. Mr. Lawson has been a respected student and we continue to hold him in respect."

In other developments in the spreading demonstrations, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the leader of the successful boycott against segregated bus seating in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1956, has urged President Eisenhower to "take immediate action to restore law and order" in Montgomery, where, he said, a "reign of terror has broken out". Dr. King said Montgomery police were using "Gestapo-like" methods against students at Alabama State College, a Negro institution, who demonstrated for equal rights. Montgomery Police Commissioner Sullivan commented that he "would welcome any type of unbiased, unprejudiced investigation of the way in which the matter has been handled". He added that he did "not care to reply or comment on the rantings of a rabble-rousing agitator".

In Richmond, Virginia, students from Union Theological Seminary, a Southern Presbyterian school, joined Negro students picketing a downtown department store to protest against segregated eating facilities there.

White and Negro clergy in Fayetteville, Durham, and Winston-Salem, North Carolina, have expressed sympathy and support for the demonstrations.

The 165 staff members of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA's Board of Christian Education have pledged their moral and financial support to students involved in demonstrations against "white only" sit-down lunch counters. The workers have contributed to a fund for students, "to be used wherever the courts must protect (their) rights".

EPS, Geneva

In Brief

Dr. Edwin Dahlberg, president of the National Council of Churches in the USA, advocated unity between races and denominations at a public service in Little Rock, Arkansas, in spite of a bomb threat and picketing in the street by segregationist leaders. No bomb was found in the building and threats failed to stop the meeting, which was called by the Arkansas Council of Churches.

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The Billy Graham Crusade team reports that about 350,000 people heard the American evangelist on his African tour and that 41,000 of these made decisions. Dr. Graham conducted rallies in Israel last week.

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The British Council of Churches has published a factual guide and interpretation dealing with the situation in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The writer, the Rev. D. Alan Keighley, joint secretary of the International Department of the Council, bases his "personal view" on BCC discussion of the Federation's problems. The pamphlet, "Review in Central Africa", includes proposals for the future.

* *

Archbishop Herman, head of the Orthodox Church of Finland, will retire on July 1. The archbishop, who was born in Esthonia in 1878, has served since 1925.

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The ordination of the first woman pastor in the Lutheran national Church of Sweden will be celebrated on Palm Sunday in the Cathedral of Stockholm and broadcast on radio and television.

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Pastor Pierre Bourguet, president of the French Reformed Church, has been decorated by King Gustav VI as a Commander in Sweden's Royal Order of the Polar Star. The award was conferred at a private audience during a two weeks visit to Sweden at the invitation of the Swedish office of cultural relations and the French Reformed Church in Stockholm.

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A third meeting of the international Christian Peace Conference initiated by Eastern European Christians has been deferred from April to September, 1960. The meeting, to be held in Prague, was postponed because of pressure on hotel accommodation. The Information Service of the Czechoslovak Churches comments that the September date is also preferable because by then there might be clarification of the international situation.

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Pastor Martin Niemöller, addressing New York Zionists, declared that recent anti-Semitic acts in West Germany showed that the past was not dead. He criticised the inadequacy of information given to German youth about the crimes of the National Socialist regime.

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The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, has invited the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Athenagoras I, to visit England for conversations on doctrine. The last conversation between the two churches took place in 1931.

EPS, Geneva

